



**A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association (YURA)**

**Spring 2019**

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**YURA is a member of CURAC/ARUCC, the federation of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada/Associations de retraités dans les universités et collèges du Canada**

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## Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Dear YURA Members:

What a winter we've had! Twice we encountered major storms on Tuesdays, and had to cancel our office hours on those days. Thank goodness winter is finally yielding to spring.

We have had a steady stream of inquiries at our office, and we are grateful to our volunteers who donate their time and talent to staff the office and welcome drop-in visitors. There are two main types of inquiries we get from our visitors. Some are about to retire, and wonder what it's been like for us. We provide them with ideas, and information about YURA, and they leave encouraged. Others are YURA members with inquiries about various retirement matters, and if we don't know the answers, we can direct them to someone who does. We are grateful to our volunteers: John Lennox on Tuesdays, John Wilson and Agnes Fraser on Wednesdays, and Philippa Marchetti and Sara Kozlowski on Thursdays. Many hands make light work, so if you would like to volunteer, please let us know.

At our executive meeting of February 19, the dates of this year's theatre outings were confirmed: The **Merry Wives of Windsor** (Stratford) on June 18, and **Brigadoon** (Shaw) on October 8. Our **Annual General Meeting will be on Friday, October 25, beginning at 11 a.m.** Confirmation of the guest speaker is pending; we will provide information about the guest speaker soon.

Our Events sub-committee is continuing to work on plans for outings such as our very successful visit to the Bata Shoe Museum in the fall. If you have ideas for visits that YURA could organize for our members, please send an email to [YURA@yorku.ca](mailto:YURA@yorku.ca).

Fred Fletcher, the representative for the YURA Executive Committee on the Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians at York, let us know that the **spring meeting of ARFL will take place on May 17** in the Harry Crowe Room starting at 11 a.m.,

followed by lunch and a speaker (Laurence Parker, Biology). The annual meeting of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) will take place at the University of Guelph on May 22 to 24.

Members will have received a letter from Charmaine Courtis asking that you consider making a donation to support one of the three YURA student scholarships, or the York Camps Subsidy Fund, or the YFS Food Bank. We have been encouraged by the response. YURA continues to be pro-active in providing student support. If you missed Charmaine's letter, you can donate at this link: [www.giving.yorku.ca/YURA](http://www.giving.yorku.ca/YURA) .

When you have a spare moment (rare for retirees, we know), why not jot down some Reminiscences for the Newsletter. We know you've been thinking of preserving some of the highlights of your early years for those who come after you, so why not start now?

Let's hope that the forecasts are right – a longer and warmer spring than usual. Should you have any concerns, please contact us at [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca), or call us at 416-736-2100, ext. 70664. Again, thanks to our volunteers who generously donate their time, energy and ideas!

Wish best wishes,

--**Charmaine Courtis and Ian Greene**, Co-presidents

## 2018 SHOWCASE PHOTOS

The Showcase photos were taken by Gene Denzel, Steve Dranitsaris and Noel Corbett



Cathie Stone, Mildred Theobalds, and John Wilson



Jane Grant and Susan Lanoue

**SOME OF OUR MEMBERS MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT**

**The CURAC (College and University Retiree Associations of Canada) Newsletter is available on line at the web site [www.CURAC](http://www.CURAC).**

## IN MEMORIAM

Palomba Yashinsky

January 7, 2019

Patricia Cates

January 20, 2019

Robert Adolph

February 12, 2019



Charmaine Courtis and Billie Mullick

## Life as it was back then: Reminiscence

*Our 25<sup>th</sup> Reminiscence is authored by Ann Pestano. She retired from York in 2017. At the time, Ann was the Administrative Assistant to the Chair of Psychology in the Faculty of Health. She has entitled her Reminiscence, "Life as it was back then in Trinidad – a tribute to my mom Zita Dorothy Farrell."*

As a child, I thought my mom was the best mom ever, don't we all? She was perfect. She was beautiful and loved fashion. To me, she could do anything and everything. She was strong and brave, she was loving. She sewed all the girls' clothes. We had new dresses for Christmas and Easter and for the annual garden party held by St. Joseph's Convent where my sisters and I went to school. She sewed new curtains for every Christmas. In Trinidad, most of the houses are open to the elements with the sun and dust doing their damage, hence the annual ritual of replacing curtains. She was creative. I am sure my brothers were the only motor bike riders with home-made rain coats that covered both the rider and the bike. She was the army sergeant of the family who also directed trades people hired to renovate the house. She would instruct them how to dig drains so that the water would flow this way, not that way, and she was usually right. Christmas morning we would wake up to a house transformed overnight. New curtains were hung, freshly baked bread, accompanied by a leg of baked smoked ham that was covered all over with cloves to bring out the flavour. A tree branch was decorated as a Christmas tree, under which were placed lots of gifts. Where they had been hidden no one knew. Because it was Christmas we were given a special treat – one whole egg each!

Normally eggs had to be scrambled with sausages or whatever it took to stretch the meal to feed the whole family. There were nine children, five girls and four boys, with two of my dad's children from a previous relationship living with us on and off. The oldest sat at a large dining table with china dishes while the youngest sat on a side table with enamel dishes. We were outside, playing cricket or hop scotch or pitching marbles, but we knew when lunch was ready because my mom would stand in the doorway and ring a bell. My mom loved the neck and feet of the chicken, or so she said. As an adult I realized that she shared food for all the children and took what was left for herself. She recycled before recycling was fashionable. Our school lunches consisted of empty jelly (jam)

bottles filled with milk and red sweet drink (pop) – delicious! For every child's birthday we had home-made hand-churned soursop or coconut ice cream, with all of us taking turns to churn.

My dad is the other half of a beautiful love story. I came to Canada in December 1973, two years after the famous union of Pierre and Margaret Trudeau. There was a lot of buzz about their age difference. I thought it was perfectly normal since my dad was twenty-three years older than my mom. My dad, the son of an Anglican minister, was born in 1900 and at sixteen my mom had the first of nine children. I am the eighth, born when my dad was fifty-two. My mom was the vocal commander in chief, my dad was the quiet one, whom we loved and respected. They were devoted to each other. When my dad came home in a new car, none of the kids could get in until my mom sat in the front seat and was driven in and out of the driveway. My mom once told me that wives should maintain an element of mystery, don't colour your hair in front of your husband; no wonder daddy thought her hair was always jet black. My dad was an Agricultural/Customs Officer. He was very 'prim and proper', a hat on his head and a walking stick to complete the look. Trinidad was under British rule until 1962 and I guess he took the British ways to heart. A mango does not fall far from the tree so perhaps some of that 'prim and properness' rubbed off on some of the children.

I was never interested in my parents' background. It was just too confusing. When my children said "What is your background? What are we?" To their annoyance, I would say, "Well, my parents look just like me." Recently, I had a visit from cousins on my dad's side. They mentioned having pictures of ancestors wearing kilts. When I inquired about the kilts, they said don't you know you are part Irish? Who knew? Hint – my maiden name is Farrell, but my dad never drank alcohol. Irish and no alcohol did not add up to me. My mom was the first of five daughters. Apparently her dad was a native Trinidadian, an Arawak, who looked as though he had some Chinese in him (he did not), and whose



last name was French sounding – Douen. He was not French but he owned a hat shop that he named Madam Chapeau. Her mother, a Tardieu, was of French ancestry. The Tardieus own land “down the Islands” a section of Trinidad beaches that was then privately owned and accessible only by boat. As a child my mom and lots of cousins, aunts and uncles spent weekends and vacations there where she learnt to swim like a fish. She loved every minute.

My mom dabbled in all sorts of endeavours. She drove her little Volkswagen around town volunteering on committees. One year she reared turkeys, in a fenced yard at home in the city no less. Another time we were feeding baby goats milk out of baby bottles. At times she raised pigs in the country and took meat orders at Christmas. Once the runt of the pig litter was not breathing and she performed CPR on it, I’m not sure if this one ended up as a pet. Then there was the pure bred dog breeding era. Mama dog was in labour and having difficulty because a pup was breach, in went you-know-whose hands and out came the pup.

The retirement age in Trinidad was, and still is, 60. You retire, hang out with friends and “lime” i.e. drink beers and rum and coke. Except at 60 my dad still had 9 children to feed. When he retired from the Government, he went to work as a manager for a coffee and cocoa estate. One of my brothers went with him to help him run the estate. The position came with a large manager’s house right on the beach at a place called Moruga. Christopher Columbus landed here on his third voyage in 1498. Every year the locals put on a Columbus landing re-enactment festival. The family stayed in the city with my mother so the children could go to school and we joined my father on weekends and vacations. We were allowed to bring a friend or two with us. In addition to coffee and cocoa there were oranges and portugals (a cross between a mandarin and an orange and very easy to peel), that we picked from the trees as we ran down the mud steps to the beach. I do not know if sunscreen was invented back then. There was very little crime in those days, at least not that we were aware of. The girls

were allowed to roam the beach as we played but there was always one of our brothers present to keep an eye on us. My older brother had a little fishing boat in which he took us for rides. My dad also bought him a gentle old white horse called Alice and my brother would hold each of the little ones on the horse and give us rides around the compound, that is if Alice didn’t get tired and just plop herself down. Because my mom was in the city, a cook was hired. We had the most wonderful meals, hot roasted bake every day and one particular cook made a dessert out of this world called Bavarian Cream.

I cannot end this without one last story about my mom. One day dad was not at home. Mummy was sitting at her sewing machine in a room near the window. She noticed a young man hiding in a tree looking into the house. She did not panic. She just said in a very loud voice, loud enough for the man to hear “Go into the bedroom and bring daddy’s gun for me”. That man scaled down the tree so fast never to be seen again. She was not joking. Daddy was a hunter with two licensed guns.

Now, when my grandkids ask who am I? It will be even more complicated to explain. Their dad’s name is Pestano but it is not Italian. Their grandfather Pestano is the son of Charles Pestano of Guyana in South America. Charles’ dad was Portuguese, his mother Indian. However, the grandkids’ mom, whose married non-Italian last name is Pestano, is actually Italian. Only in Canada, eh?

As an adult I discovered my mom’s imperfections – she was human after all. My eight siblings and I have just said goodbye to our beloved mom. She simply closed her eyes and went to sleep. She was almost 96. Our dad died in 1979 when our mom was 56. She never remarried. We had her all to ourselves.

**--Ann Pestano**

## THE WAR EFFORT BY FRENCH CANADIANS

*A personal note: I was overhearing a particularly boisterous co-resident here at my retirement residence who was telling a small audience of other males that he spent the war watching over French Canadians in "the bush in the north" because "the French Canadians did not fight in the war, and that's the truth of it." I was quite stunned by this proclamation as I had never heard anything to this effect (I was born and raised in Quebec). So I looked it up online and I found the following from the Archives of the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs. I thought that Francophiles and other YURA members might be interested.*

– **Anne-Marie Ambert**

There is little reference in history books to the war effort by French Canadians. This is unfortunate because it prevents us from truly understanding how we contributed to the current state of the world, and deprives us of heroes. It is also isolating because it leads us to believe that French Canadians were absent from the major events that shaped modern history. This was not the case. During the Second World War, Francophones took part in numerous military campaigns. Proportionately, their war effort was just as impressive as that of the other linguistic groups in Canada.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to identify precisely the number of Francophones from the Canadian Confederation that served in the three forces (the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Army) during the Second World War.

The political context of the day as well as sparse statistics (which are open to interpretation) have distorted the picture for a long time. This has prevented many French Canadians from fully understanding, accepting and respecting the important role that their Veterans played in establishing the democratic, social and economic foundations of the world we know today.

Some would argue that it is obvious when comparing the total population of a province to the total number of soldiers enlisted that Quebec lagged behind. While in some other provinces the percentage of the male population between 18 and 45 enlisted during the Second World War reached as high as 50.47 per cent, only 25.69 per cent of men in the same age range enlisted in Québec. Such figures make it easy to believe that the French Canadians did not participate fully in the war effort, but two factors merit close attention:

All statistics cannot be interpreted equally. These figures do not take into consideration the larger number of men available in the other provinces—that is, all the men between the ages of 18 and 45 deemed fit for wartime service by the government. For example, British Columbia, with a much smaller total population than Quebec, had a much higher coefficient of available men. In other words, this province could provide a higher percentage of military personnel, despite its smaller population.

All Francophones were not necessarily from Quebec. Just like today, there were Francophones living all over the country! Statistics that only look at Quebec to determine the number of French-speakers in Canada (especially at that time) distort reality at the outset. In actuality, there were 57 French-speaking or bilingual units, battalions and batteries during the Second World War, just in the army and infantry alone! Some of the most famous were:

the Royal 22e Régiment  
the Régiment de la Chaudière  
the Régiment de Maisonneuve  
the Fusiliers Mont-Royal

In a nutshell, there were enough French Canadian infantry forces in the Second World War to form an entire division of the Canadian Army, had circumstances so permitted! Add in the navy, the air force (including the famous 425 "Alouettes" Squadron, attached to the British Royal Air Force), the merchant navy and the Veterans Guard of

Canada (over half of whom were Francophones), and it becomes eminently clear that Francophones did their part.

In *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Forces*, a book we heartily recommend to grasp the full scope of a situation that is impossible to describe here in just a few lines, Serge Bernier and Jean Pariseau estimate that, of the some 730,625 Canadian military personnel, both men and women, who served overseas or on the home front, over 139,550 were Francophones. And if we take into consideration the civilian war effort (see the Civilians section of this Web site), the gap between the actual contribution by French Canadians and what we know about it widens considerably.

Though French Canadians generally viewed the war much differently than English Canadians, particularly in terms of their denunciation of conscription and their indifference to the British Crown, they proved they were ready to defend their homeland. And, many of them had to do it in English, a language that was completely foreign to most of them.

Not only were there French Canadian heroes whom we can all be proud of, but there were many of them! We hope that their stories will lead you to see things as they really were, differently. . .

N.B.: We realize that this portrait of French Canadian soldiers in the Second World War is incomplete. For example, the historical and social context in Canada at that time has barely been touched upon.

Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier. *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces*; Volume 1 1763-1969: *the Fear of a Parallel Army*, Department of Supply and Services (Canadian Government Publishing Center), 1986.

## ADDENDUM: THE VAN-DOOS

I found the above article particularly interesting because Eilonwy and I visited Quebec City last summer, and one of the museums we went to was in the Citadel. There was a large display about the Royal 22nd Regiment (the van-doods) and their contribution at the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The members of the 22nd realized that they were disliked by many Anglophone Canadians, and so did their best to be more professional and more strategic than the other Canadian regiments. They succeeded in establishing a reputation as one of the best Canadian regiments. My dad was a soldier at Vimy Ridge in a western Canadian regiment, and when I was a boy, he told me stories about the bravery of the 22nd Regiment. You can pass this on to your misinformed resident!

--Ian Greene

## GOOD READS

*A Voyager Out: The Life of Mary Kingsley* by Katherine Frank, 1986. I am in the process of re-reading old books and I thought you might like to hear about this one. It is the story of one of the first European women who explored the African continent alone (not as a wife), in the 1890s when she made 3 trips—the first at age 31. She was also the first European woman to climb Mount Cameroon. She actually waded through swamps and learned how to canoe in rapids on her own—all the while decked out in her Victorian garb. As well, she brought back specimens of fish, insects, lizards, and snakes for the British Museum. The purpose of her trips was to study indigenous religions in particular but she went as a trader to fund her trips rather than as a missionary. She also ministered to the sick as she was a nurse in addition to being a scientist.

We follow her both through her conventional and

rather lonely Victorian life and through her adventures, including long boat journeys to reach various parts of the African continent. What is also interesting is that she was probably a pantheist and strove to really understand the Africans' spiritual life, rooted as it was in the spirits of nature. In those days, the other Europeans with whom she travelled were government employees, missionaries, and traders. All other European women she encountered were wives. Interestingly, it was also inconceivable for the Africans themselves that she had no husband as all African women who were of age were married.

Mary was actually favourable towards polygamy as she saw the positive personal and societal functions it fulfilled in these African cultures at that time. She believed that missionaries were ruining the familial, social, and moral fabric of the societies.

Interestingly enough, although she insisted on her right to belong to various scientific societies in England, she tended to be against the feminist movement of the day. Sadly, her life was cut short as she died at age 38 from the typhoid she caught while nursing Boer prisoners of war. She was fittingly buried at sea.

—Anne-Marie Ambert

## ESOTERICA

In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes.

When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. Hence the phrase..... 'Goodnight, sleep tight.'

In the 1400's a law was set forth in England that a man was allowed to beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb. Hence we have 'the rule of thumb'

It was the accepted practice in Babylon 4,000 years ago that, for a month after the wedding, the bride's

father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey beer and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the honey month, which we know today as the honeymoon.

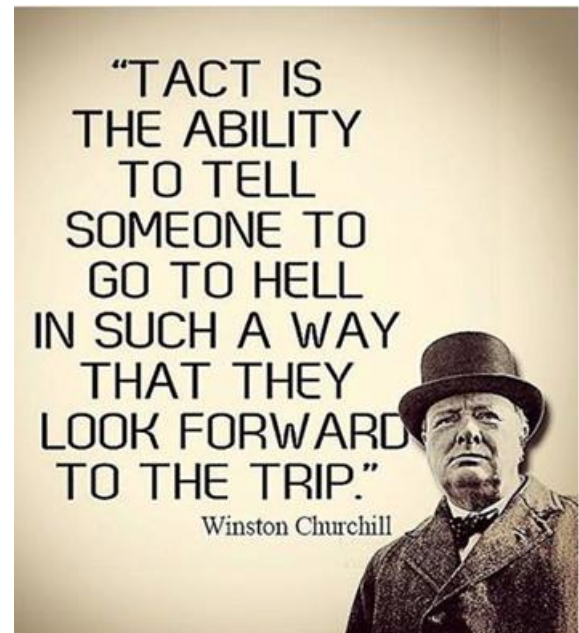
In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts... So in old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them 'Mind your pints and quarts, and settle down.' It's where we get the phrase 'mind your P's and Q's'

Many years ago in England, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim, or handle, of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service. 'Wet your whistle' is the phrase inspired by this practice.

Every day more money is printed for Monopoly than for the U.S. Treasury.

Coca-Cola was originally green.

-- (Contributed by **Sheila Creighton in 2013.**)



Contributed by **Rosemarie Nielsen**



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## YURA Office Hours

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